

Good morning Senator DeFronzo, Representative Guerrero and distinguished members of the Transportation Committee. My name is Charles Hunter. I am the Director of State Relations for the New England Central Railroad and I am here today as Chairman of the Connecticut Railroad Association to testify in SUPPORT of House Bill 5657 - An Act Concerning the Restoration of Freight Rail Service.

Just by way of background, I would like to share some relevant facts with the members of the committee as to availability and utility of freight rail service in the State of Connecticut. The New England Central Railroad is just one of eight member freight railroads within the Connecticut Railroad Association. Our Member railroads operate freight trains on 390 miles of dedicated freight track in Connecticut, and another 150 miles of track shared with passenger trains. In 2007, we employed approximately 200 employees in Connecticut. Our trains carried more than 45,000 loaded freight cars or 3.6 Million tons of freight, which translates to approximately 200,000 trucks that did not travel on the state's highways or local roads.

Our railroads spent more than \$7 Million in local goods and services in Connecticut and served approximately 250 local businesses throughout the state.

With the increase in roadway traffic congestion and continually rising costs to maintain the structural integrity of an aging highway system, the use of freight rail enjoying a resurgence of interest and attention. The Obama administration, in recognition of the importance of railroads and the movement of freight and passengers, has dedicated \$1.5 billion for Discretionary Grants by the U.S. Secretary of Transportation to Surface Transportation Projects, and \$27.5 billion for state highway programs, a portion of which states may flex to freight rail projects.

Many freight rail improvement projects enjoy the unique asset of being "shovel ready" and thereby having the ability to make immediate use of such stimulus funding. According to U.S. Department of Commerce estimates, every \$1 of rail infrastructure investment generates a \$3 return to the economy.

To the extent that this body is contemplating the dedication of state and/or federal funding to the improvement of freight rail in Connecticut, please be advised that freight railroads in Connecticut have developed lists of "shovel ready" projects across the state in more than 50 cities and towns that will help improve freight rail service, remove more trucks off Connecticut's congested highways and streets, improve air quality, and offer increased economic development opportunities. Each project will add jobs to the economy by utilizing local contractors and focus on local railroad improvements.

Connecticut freight railroad employees and our business customers support House Bill 5657 - An Act Concerning the Restoration of Freight Rail Service and urge the Legislature to pass this important legislation that will reestablish Connecticut's partnership with freight rail companies by offering matching grant money to refurbish track, reduce greenhouse gases, reduce truck traffic, save energy, and otherwise improve freight rail service for businesses throughout Connecticut.

I am available to answer any questions you may have concerning freight rail service in Connecticut.